
Worksheet
Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

OFFICE: Kingman Field Office (KFO), AZ-310

NEPA DOCUMENT NUMBER: DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2012-0041-DNA

CASE FILE NUMBER: None

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Black Mountain, Desert Bighorn Sheep Capture and Release, 2012-2017.

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Black Mountains, Mohave County, Arizona, Game Management Units 15D and 15 B West (Maps 1 and 2, and Table 1).

APPLICANT (if any): Arizona Game and Fish Department, Region III.

A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures:

The proposed project is to capture desert bighorn sheep in the Black Mountains in Game Management Unit (GMU) 15D and relocate them north to GMU 15 B West which is also in the Black Mountains (Maps 1 and 2 and Table 1). Capture and translocation of the desert bighorn sheep will initially take place in November 2012. If 52 bighorn are not captured in 2012, then additional captures and transplants may occur during the fall of the year as needed until 2017.

The proposed project would involve the capture of up to 52 bighorn sheep. Approximately 40 of the captured bighorn sheep would be being transplanted during any one event. If funds are available, 12 additional bighorn sheep ewes would be captured, fitted with GPS radio collars and released at their capture locations in GMU 15D. The desired transplant ram:ewe composition would be 30-40 rams per 100 ewes. The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) would remove only Class I and II rams and not remove Class III or Class IV rams

The capture operation should take 2-5 days to complete, assuming no weather delays or logistical problems. The fall time frame should provide suitable conditions for a successful capture as air temperatures are low, bighorn sheep are not in late stages of pregnancy, and lambs are no longer dependent on ewes.

The net-gun method would be used to capture sheep. The net-gun method involves using a gun to shoot a net at sheep during low-level helicopter overflights. This may be done with the assistance of spotters located on the ground. Once captured the helicopter would land and the bighorn would receive a brown-colored GPS collar and ear tag, a blood and genetic sample may be taken. The captured animals would be immediately blindfolded, hobbled and if possible, the capture net would be removed. If the net cannot be removed during mugging, personnel at the staging area will remove the net. The bighorn will be transported by helicopter, either carried

inside or slung underneath, from the capture location to the capture staging area. At the capture staging areas each bighorn would be processed and loaded into the transport boxes. Captures would be conducted by the AGFD and volunteers. Capture operations would be scheduled to occur during weekdays, however there is potential that capture during a weekend day may occur due to weather or scheduling problems.

The bighorn would be captured in GMU 15D which is comprised of non-wilderness and wilderness public lands. Approximately 70% of the capture area is within the Mount Nutt and Warm Springs wildernesses. Whenever possible capture would occur outside of wilderness and landing in wilderness would be avoided when possible. Depending upon where individual bighorn are net-gunned, there may be as few as 25 landings of the helicopter, or as many as 40 landings within wilderness. All other landings would take place outside of wilderness. The capture areas include BLM, Arizona State Trust land and private land however capture operations would not occur or affect any private land. If needed the helicopter may land on Arizona State Trust land.

There may be up to three staging areas needed for the capture area and up to three staging areas needed for release. It is likely that only two would be needed at each end. Up to 30 people (agency and volunteers) may be present at each staging area. At the capture staging areas, dry camping would occur for up to 3 nights. Anywhere from 10-15 people may camp at one of the staging areas as local people would go to their homes for the evening. Camping and staging areas have been selected in areas that are already disturbed, along dirt or maintained roads, or within washes (Table 1).

Bighorn would be released into GMU 15B West from an existing road outside of wilderness therefore no helicopter would be needed for the release. Bighorn would be released the same day as capture or held overnight and then transported to the release location. Bighorn will be released with at least two hours of daylight remaining or at daybreak.

Following the capture and translocation, the AGFD would monitor the released bighorn via a satellite uplink primarily from a remote computer. Since the collars being deployed have satellite uplink capability, there would be no regular telemetry flights over wilderness or non-wilderness. After approximately two years, the collars would drop-off the bighorn at which point AGFD personnel would recover the collars by hiking or riding horseback in from the ground. Under rare, extenuating circumstances (up to four times annually) a telemetry flight may be scheduled for monitoring problematic collars. During such a flight, the plane would remain 2,000 ft. above ground level.

If mortality signals are received, AGFD personnel would hike or ride horseback to the signal within approximately 48 hours.

The livestock grazing permittees for the Big Ranch B, Black Mountain, and Boriana B allotments would be notified of the capture and release dates.

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

LUP Name: *Kingman Resource Management Plan/EIS*
Date Approved: March 1995

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Remarks: RMP Decision number and narrative:

SM02/II Special Management- Manage the twelve "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern" designation according to the goals and objectives in the RMP pages 95 to 111. Evaluate land use authorizations, including all existing activity plans, for compatibility with goals and objectives of the area of critical environmental concern.

WL01/VIB Wildlife - Continue implementation and revision of Habitat Management Plans in coordination and cooperation with the state wildlife agency and interested publics. (Page 79, Objectives and Planned Actions section)

BM21/VIC Black Mountain ACEC - Promote opportunities for scientific research of ecological and cultural resources.

BM14/I Black Mountain ACEC – Maintain balanced resource development while providing for public demand and sensitive resource needs. Protect and enhance special status species habitat. Protect cultural resources. Manage wilderness to maintain wilderness values and characteristics.

BM15/I Black Mountain ACEC – Improve and maintain habitat while providing for the needs of wild burros, desert bighorn sheep, and other wildlife species and livestock..

* SM= Special Management Areas; WL= Wildlife; BM=Black Mountain

B. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Black Mountain Ecosystem Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (AZ-025-95-032), 1996 (BME Plan)

1. Pg. 36, #4. BME Plan: Initiate coordination with agencies and individuals that are responsible for management of land adjacent to the Black Mountain ecosystem to delineate and designate movement corridors between the Black Mountain and other ecosystems.
2. Pg. 49, #4, BME Plan: Discusses procedures for wildlife population and capture of wildlife in wilderness. Capture may occur as often as every year. Two methods may be used: net-gun, and remote chemical injection. Methods described in Appendix 4 (Capture methodologies for Bighorn Sheep) pg. 102 BME Plan.

3. Pg. 102, Appendix 4, BME Plan: Capture sites: discussed: wherever bighorn occur, inside or outside of wilderness.

Transplant of desert bighorn sheep into the Artillery Mountains, 1994. Environmental Assessment No: AZ-025-94-057. BLM Kingman Field Office, Arizona: This document analyzes transplant and capture of bighorn sheep within the Kingman Field Office, BLM.

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

Documentation of answer and explanation:

The proposed action is essentially the same action as that analyzed in the *Transplant of Desert Bighorn Sheep into the Artillery Mountains*, 1994 EA No. AZ-025-94-057. The capture routine and location are very similar and the purpose is the same (capture and transplant bighorn to augment existing populations). This EA analyzed impacts from the capture and release of bighorn sheep within the Black Mountain Range including impacts to the wildernesses located within this range. It also analyzed impacts to wildlife, wild burros, livestock grazing, special status species, and cumulative impacts from the capture and release actions. The collaring of bighorn was part of the original EA however collared animals were anticipated to be encountered in different wildernesses from the new proposed action. Telemetry was to occur in the original EA as well as proposed to occur in the new proposed action. Telemetry in the new action would occur via satellite downlink versus overflights as proposed in the original EA. Telemetry via satellite downlinks would be less obtrusive to wilderness values than was originally proposed as it is done remotely from an office versus wilderness overflights. The number of captures in the new proposal (up to 52 bighorn) would be smaller (up to 70 bighorn) than proposed in the original EA.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?

Documentation of answer and explanation: Yes, the range of alternatives remains the same

1. Capturing animals outside and inside of wilderness, and 2. Capturing animals outside of wilderness only, and 3. The No Action alternative. The current environmental concerns, interests, and resources values are unchanged from 1994.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

Documentation of answer and explanation: There are no new circumstances or information that would change the analysis of the new proposed action. The project area that is located east of US 93 is part of the California condor Nonessential Experimental Population however it has been determined that

there would be “no affect” to condors or their habitat (Peck 2009 Biological Evaluation, and AGFD 2010, MRDP).

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Documentation of answer and explanation: Yes, bighorn sheep would still be affected by capture and release. They would still receive indirect effects from wearing the collars. Data from the collars would be used to determine movement areas, habitat use, and mortality events (the collars give off a mortality signal). Part of the capture area is within the Black Mountain Ecosystem Management Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The Black Mountain Ecosystem Management plan evaluated the impacts of bighorn capture and monitoring and impacts are essentially similar or the same. Wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would still be temporarily impaired by the use of aircraft during the capture. The original proposal evaluated impacts for up to 50 helicopter landings. This proposal would have as few as 25 landings and as many as 40 landings, thus fewer landings. Bighorn would be released from an existing road outside of wilderness therefore no helicopter would be needed for the release. Impacts associated with telemetry activities would be less than the original project since telemetry would be more remote via satellite downlink. Telemetry flights with aircraft would rarely occur under the current proposal.

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Documentation of answer and explanation: Yes, the original EA was sent out to over 500 individuals and groups which represented those concerned with wilderness impacts, wildlife impacts, and grazing management impacts. There have been no issues or complaints from these individuals or groups following implementation of the original proposed action nor following subsequent captures that have occurred in years 1995, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2008, and 2009, and 2010

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Resource/Agency Represented</u>
Ramone McCoy, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Wilderness		Bureau of Land Management
Chad Benson, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist		Bureau of Land Management
Erin Butler		Arizona Game and Fish Department

Conclusion

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

<u>/s/ Rebecca L. Peck</u>	<u>8/10/2012</u>
Signature of Project Lead	Date
Rebecca Peck	

<u>/s/ Don McClure</u>	<u>8/10/2012</u>
Signature of NEPA Coordinator	Date
Ramone McCoy	

<u>/s/ Ruben A. Sanchez</u>	<u>8/10/2012</u>
Signature of the Responsible Official	Date
Ruben Sanchez	
Field Manager	
Kingman Field Office	

References

Peck, Rebecca, 2009. Biological Evaluation for Federally Listed Species, State Listed Species, and Migratory Birds. Bureau of Land Management, Kingman Field Office, Arizona

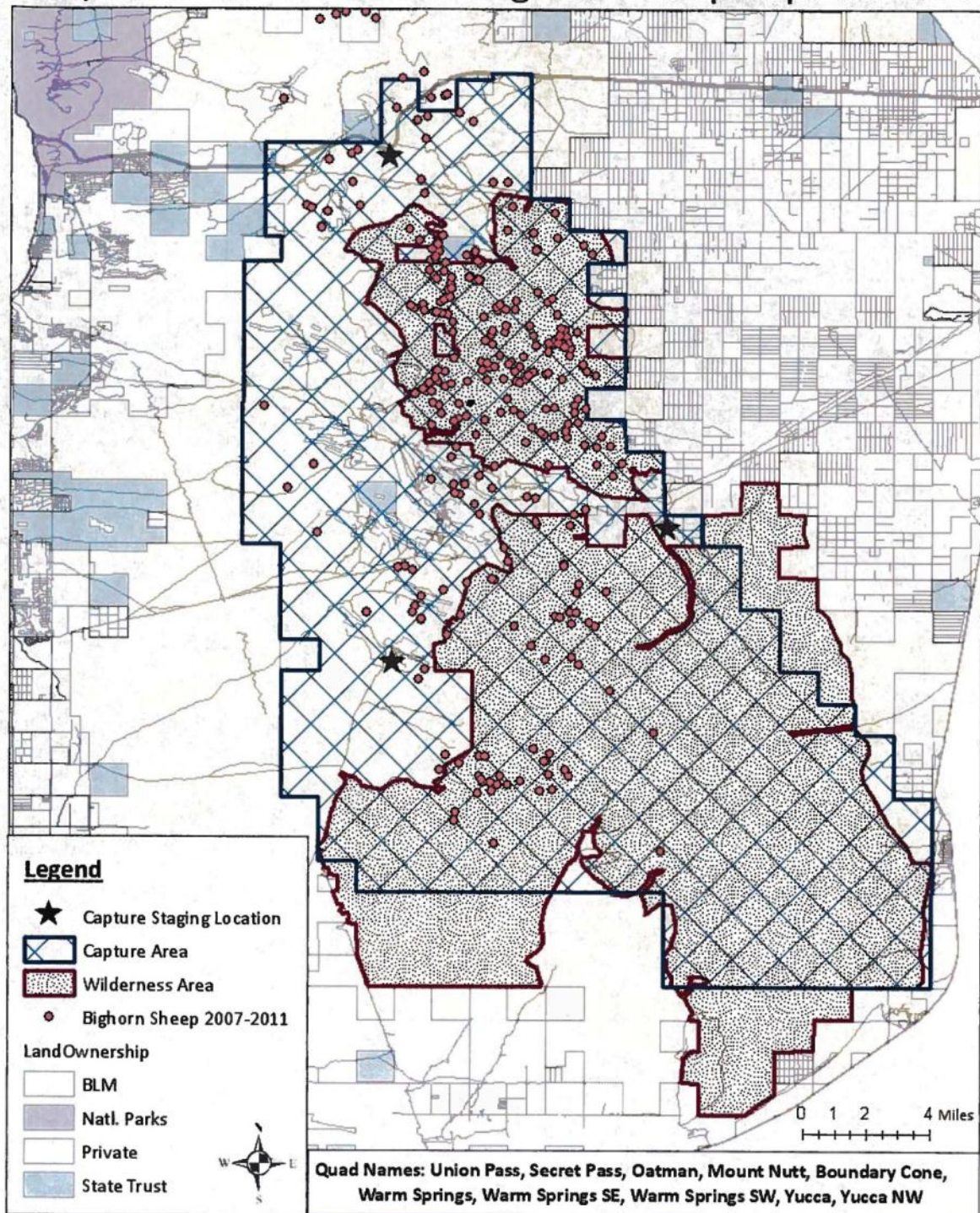
Arizona Game and Fish Department 2010. Minimum Requirements Decision Process for the US 93 Bighorn Sheep Capture. Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, Arizona.

Table 1. Black Mountains capture and release locations.

PROJECT LOCATION	LANDOWNER and/or SITE NAME	TOWNSHIP	RANGE	SECTION	COORDINATES (Northing / Lat.) (Easting / Long.)	
	CAPTURE - BLM and State Trust Lands in GMU 15D					
	McHeffy Staging, Sec 9				34.95778	114.40511
		17N	18W	2-11, 14-23, 26-35		
		17N	19W	1-18, 23-26, 35-36		
		17N	20W	1-5, 8-16		
		18N	18W	6-7, 17-21, 27- 34		
		18N	19W	All		
		18N	20W	1-6, 8-36		
	Hwy 66 Staging,				Off the gas pipeline	
		19N	19W	4-10, 15-23, 25-36		
		19N	20W	All		
		19N	21W	1, 12-13, 24		
		20N	19W	4-8, 16-21, 28- 32		
		20N	20W	All		
		20N	21W	12-13, 24-25, 36		
		21N	19W	7, 18-19, 30-32		
	Union Pass Staging, Sec 22				35.19121	114.40658
		21N	20W	10, 12-15, 19- 36		
	RELEASE - BLM and NPS Lands in GMU 15BW					
	Benalli Landing	31N	21W	18-19	36.07092	114.57774
	South Mt Wilson	29N	21W	19	35.89390	114.58023
Fortification	31N	22W	32	36.03294	114.66904	

*located outside of Mount Wilson Wilderness

Map #1: Black Mountains Bighorn Sheep Capture Area



Map #2: GMU 15BW Release Locations

